



**U.S. Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
Western District of Texas**

**Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Shana Jones, Special Assistant  
Daryl Fields, Public Information Officer  
(210) 384-7452

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**FRIO COUNTY TAX ASSESSOR PLEADS GUILTY TO CHARGES AGAINST HIM**

**United States Attorney Johnny Sutton** announced today that Hector Cantu, appearing before United States District Judge Xavier Rodriguez, plead guilty yesterday to federal theft charges. His sentencing has been set for January 23, 2009.

Mr Cantu was the elected tax assessor/collector for Frio County from 2000-2004. During his tenure in office, though he deposited checks received at his office into bank accounts controlled by the county, he also stole a great deal of cash as it came into his office. The accounts for which Mr. Cantu was responsible were: the motor vehicle account; the general account; the escrow account; and a special account.

The Defendant began work at the tax assessor/collector's office as an employee in 1996. In 1999 he was appointed to the head position. He was elected in 2000 and served until he was defeated in November 2004. The missing money was always cash that had been received by the tax assessor/collector's office, but never deposited.

The Defendant's employees never had access to the bank statements, only the carbons of the deposit slips Cantu left behind when he would take the money to the bank for deposit, so they would never know what was actually deposited and what was not deposited.

By pleading guilty, Mr. Cantu admitted that he took cash from amounts to be deposited in the motor vehicle and property tax accounts. He stated that he never manipulated records to indicate that persons who had actually paid their taxes, had not paid them. He said that he used the money to pay personal bills and repay personal loans. The amount of money the Defendant stole from the citizens of Frio County during the time covered by this Indictment is approximately \$265,000.00.

This case was investigated by the Texas Rangers and the FBI and is being prosecuted for the government by Assistant United States Attorney David Counts.